

## ABSTRACT

### FRENCH

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Stéphane Mallarmé: A Synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism

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The purpose of this paper is to analyse works of Stéphane Mallarmé, father of Symbolism, pointing out romantic and parnassian elements. Symbolism, like Romanticism, attempted to express the interior thoughts of man. The symbolist movement then, was not only a revolt against Parnassianism but also a return to Romanticism. On the other hand, one would not be incorrect in saying that Romanticism reached its culmination in the works of the symbolists poets. For this reason, an attempt will be made to show that the works of Mallarmé, father of Symbolism, can be considered as a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism.

This thesis contains three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to a discussion of Romanticism and of Parnassianism. Special attention is given to the origin, development, characteristics and influences of each school. The relationship of one School with the other is also pointed out.

The second chapter consists of a biographical sketch of Stéphane Mallarmé. Special emphasis is placed on factors and events in his life

which may have influenced or determined the elements of Romanticism and Parnassianism in his poetry.

The third chapter is devoted to an analysis of some of the poems of Stéphane Mallarmé, "Les Fenêtres," "L'Apparition," "L'Azur," "Toast Funèbre," "Le Vierge," "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." In these analyses special attention is given to the romantic and parnassian tendencies of the poems.

Since these romantic-parnassian elements occur frequently throughout his works, it has been concluded that Mallarmé's poetry can be considered as a synthesis of the two poetic schools.

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ: A SYNTHESIS OF  
ROMANTICISM AND PARNASSIANISM

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
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## PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to analyze works of Stéphane Mallarmé, father of Symbolism, pointing out romantic and parnassian elements. Symbolism, like Romanticism, attempted to express the interior thoughts of man. The symbolist movement then, was not only a revolt against Parnassianism, but also a return to Romanticism. This return to Romanticism was not, however, in the same manner, since the symbolists were more discreet in their expression of themselves. Although the movement revolted against Parnassianism, influence of the school was expressed in its desire to obtain perfection. On the other hand, one would not be incorrect in saying that Romanticism reached its culmination in the works of the symbolist poets.

This expression of Romanticism and perfection of form is perhaps most prevalent in the works of Mallarmé, leader of the symbolist poets. For this reason, the author has endeavored to show that the works of Mallarmé can be considered as a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism.

This thesis will contain three chapters: The first chapter will be devoted to a discussion of Romanticism and of Parnassianism. Special attention will be given to the origin, development, characteristics and influence of each school. The relationship of one school with the other will also be pointed out.

The second chapter will consist of a biographical sketch of Stéphane Mallarmé. Special emphasis will be placed on factors and events in his life which may have influenced or determined the

elements of Romanticism and Parnassianism in his poetry.

The third chapter will be devoted to an analysis of some of the poems of Stephane Mallarme, "Les Fenêtres," "L'Apparition," "L'Azur," "Toast Funèbre," "Le Vierge, le Vivace, et le Bel Aujourd'hui," "Hérodiade," and "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." In these analyses special attention will be given to the romantic and parnassian tendencies of the poems.

It is hoped that the evidence presented will support the conclusion that Mallarmé and his works represent a perfect balance of Romanticism and Parnassianism and can be considered a synthesis of the two poetic schools.

The writer is deeply indebted to the following persons: Dr. Benjamin F. Hudson for his helpful criticisms and patience in directing this thesis, Dr. Earle D. Clowney for his profound interest and to Mr. Crawford W. Johnson, who has been my inspiring influence from the beginning of my study of French Language Literature.

## CHAPTER I

### LITERARY BACKGROUND OF ROMANTICISM AND PARNASSIANISM

Romanticism was the revolt against, criticism of and an attack on classicism. The romantic poet exalted the imagination, insisted on the great importance of spontaneity, passions and individuality. This new movement celebrated the isolated individual, the sad, and noble soul, who rebels against social rules and the oppression of the inept and mediocre crowd. The romanticist declared that the methods and rules of classic literature were useless and obsolete. This new movement represented man as hostile to society, leading a solitary existence, the plaything of his impulses, insistent upon being himself and not everybody else.

This emphasis on the imaginations was contrary to seventeenth century classicism which represented man in the plenitude of his development, acting according to the dictates of reason, enforcing these dictates through the will. Classicism represented man as living with other men, observing the forms of society, and master of himself.<sup>1</sup>

Romanticism, opposed to classicism, was characterized by man's return to himself. In this lies the reason why it so easily escapes definition. It varies with each individual, with each age, with each race. It is marked by a perpetual flux in life and thought and feeling, which is too elusive to be fitted into formulas. It is a return

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<sup>1</sup> N. H. Clement, Romanticism in France (New York: Modern Language Association, 1939), p. 82.

to the middle ages, not only for subjects, but in a measure for its spirit, for its emotional and imaginative attitude toward life and the universe; it is the substitution of the individual for society and the exaltation of self; it is melancholy brooding and love of solitude; it is morbid introspection and self-analysis; it is a craving after stirring emotional experiences; it is nostalgic yearning after remote lands and times; it is a deep inspiration to reach out after the unknown and the unattainable; it is the rebirth of wonder; it is the glorification of instinct and passions; paradoxically, it is irresolution and incapacity for action.<sup>1</sup>

Romanticism symbolized man of feeling who dwelt in a world of emotions where sadness predominated over the happiness. It is manifested by a great bloom of personal lyricism, the exaltation of the "Moi" and sensibility. Its basic themes included God, nature, love, death, nationalism, solitude, melancholy and pessimism. These themes are especially exemplified in the works of four of the major French romantic poets: Alphonse de Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny and Alfred de Musset.

It has been said that the publication of Lamartine's Méditations in 1820, marked the beginning of French romantic poetry. Lamartine, the most religious of the group, is essentially lyric. He writes what he feels because of his need to express his sentiments. Unlike the other three poets, he had a deep appreciation of and was intimately associated with nature. For him, there was a correspondence between nature and the various moods felt by man. One also sees revealed in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 232.



his poetry a development of the themes of human misery, death, friendship, pity, and religious faith.

In 1816 Lamartine met Mme Julie Charles and fell deeply in love with her. She died the following year of consumption. This sad love gave him a theme of lasting inspiration. The most moving poems of Les Méditations retrace the various stages of this sentimental episode:

O lac l'année à peine a fini sa carrière  
Et près des flots chéris qu'elle devait revoir,  
Regarde je viens seul m'asseoir sur cette pierre  
où tu la vis s'asseoir.<sup>1</sup>

Elegiac love, religion, childhood reminiscences remained his favorite themes.

Victor Hugo was quite different from Lamartine. He felt that the poet should be a prophet and leader, or at least the inspired voice which interprets present and past events, and predicts the future:

C'est lui qui sur toutes les têtes  
Doit. . .  
Comme une torche...  
Faire flamboyer l'avenir.<sup>2</sup>

Hugo does not think profoundly; he sees everything in images. He does not always write, like Lamartine, for his personal relief. Neither does he express ideas as Vigny. He believes that the poet has a double mission: Other than his own sentiments, the poet must be a guide. He must express the ideas of his time and be an echo of everything which surrounds him.

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<sup>1</sup> Lamartine, "Le lac," Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Hugo, "Fonction du Poète," Oeuvres Complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 22.

Hugo's most striking romantic characteristic is his vivid imagination which enabled him to create striking imagery:

Cet homme marchait pur loin des sentiers obliques,  
Vêtu de probité candide et de lin blanc;  
Et, toujours de côté des pauvres ruisselant,  
Ses sacs de grains semblaient des fontaines publiques.<sup>1</sup>

Victor Hugo has also been credited with introducing freedom of verse into French romantic poetry. He feels that a poet should be able to express his feeling without having to be restricted to certain literary rules such as rime. Hugo is also famous for his enumeration, antithesis and vivid imagination.

Hugo has been criticized for the shallowness of his inspiration. True, he kept a healthy equilibrium; he did not experience such cruel dilemmas as Musset or Baudelaire. He is pompous at times, but his work is so vast and so varied that one tends to overlook some of its most appealing aspects, its fantasy, and its intimacy. Hugo created the poetry of the child, and of the family, so charmingly illustrated by his Art d'être grand père. His prodigious artistry will always command admiration.

Alfred de Vigny was totally different from the other romantic poets in that he had a deeper inspiration. His works convey a philosophical message drawn from his own experiences of life and linked with his temperament. His disappointments, his lack of religious faith, his meditative mood, give his poetry a sombre note, but his pessimism does not lead him to despair. His lesson is one of stoic resignation, quiet courage, acceptance of duty, and hope for the future of mankind.

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<sup>1</sup>Hugo, "La Légende des Siècle," p. 28.

The philosophical tendency typical of Vigny's master pieces is well represented in "Les Destinées:" "la Mort du Loup" teaches the lesson of stoic resignation to the sufferings of life:

Il disait: Si tu peux, fais que ton âme arrive,  
A force de rester studieuse et pensive,  
Jusqu' à ce haut degré de stoïque fierté  
Où, naissant dans les bois, j'ai tout d'abord monté.  
Gémir, pleurer, prier, est également lache  
Fais énergiquement ta longue et lourde tâche  
Dans la voie où le sort a voulu t'appler,  
Puis, après, comme moi, souffre et meurs sans parler.<sup>1</sup>

"la Colère de Samson" describes the betrayal of man by the women he loves; "le Mont des Oliviers" illustrates the indifference of God to the distress of humanity in the person of Christ:

Il s'arrête en un lieu nommé Gethsémani.  
Il se courbe à genoux, le front contre la terre;  
Puis regarde le ciel en appelant: Mon père!  
Mais le ciel reste, noir, et Dieu ne répond pas.<sup>2</sup>

A more optimistic view is expressed in "la Bouteille à la Mer," symbolizing not only the vicissitude but also the ultimate progress of human thought; in "L Esprit Pur," the poet confronts himself with the idea that posterity would inevitably pay tribute to his genius; "La Maison du Berger" is considered, by many critics, as his best poem for sustained beauty of style.

Though Vigny's lyricism pervades his work, it remains extremely restrained. He transposed his feeling into ideas and used concrete symbols to express abstract philosophical themes.

Alfred de Musset was the youngest of the four lyrical French

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred de Vigny, "La Mort du loup," Oeuvres Complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred de Vigny, "Le mont des Oliviers," p. 204.

romantic poets. It has been said that he was, by temperament, the most truly romantic. He experienced more deeply the tragic sufferings of passion. He fought within himself, the battle of idealism and debauchery and of good and evil.

His liaison with George Sand gave him the great love he had dreamed of, but their separation nearly brought him to despair. The repercussions of this sentimental crisis inspired his deepest and most moving verse, the four poems of "Les Nuits:" "Nuit de mai," "Nuit de décembre," "Nuit d'août" and "Nuit d'octobre." No other romantic poetry has such an intense and poignant beauty, none sounds so deeply sincere. It is indeed the purest and loveliest poetry of the heart. The poet's distress goes far beyond the sufferings of a disappointed love. It is also the anguished search for the absolute on earth and in this he differed from Lamartine and Hugo, who turned instinctively towards religion.<sup>1</sup>

Although Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, and Musset are distinct and different in their expression of themselves, their works contain certain elements which are characteristic of Romanticism and attach them to this general movement. Lamartine's religion and love for nature, Hugo's expression of images, Vigny's stoicism and expression of solitude and Musset's passionate and sensitive heart all belong to Romanticism.

While romanticism was at its peak, it faced the opposition of a new movement. This new revolt represented the school of "L'Art Pour

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Bédier and Paul Hazard, Histoire de la littérature française (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1924 ), Vol. II., p. 196.

L'Art." Theophile Gautier was the initiator of the new school. His theories tended to restrict poetry to limited themes, and some of his poems are merely aesthetic curiosities, but his work marks a turning point in French poetry. It led to the theories of the Parnassians, and it influenced Baudelaire who dedicated his Fleurs du Mal to him.

Although Gautier is realistic, there still remain many examples of romanticism in his poetry:

J'aime d'une fol amour les monts fiers et sublimes  
 Les plantes n'osent pas poser leurs pieds frileux  
 Sur le linceul d'argent qui recouvre leurs cimes;  
 Le soc s'émousserait à leurs pics anguleux.<sup>1</sup>

Gautier is also romantic in subject matter, for example "Les Affres de la Mort." He struggles against this emotion which invades him. He wants to remain discreet. To him, that which gives poetry an eternal value is not the display of sentiments but perfection of form. His poem "L'Art" is considered by many to be the manifesto of Parnassianism:

Oui, l'oeuvre sort plus belle  
 d'une forme au travail  
           Rebelle,  
 Vers, marble, onyx, émail.

Tout passe, L'Art robuste  
 Seule à l'éternité;  
           le buste  
 Survit à la cité.<sup>2</sup>

The poetry of the Parnassians is not inspirational, spontaneous, or egotistic which characterized the romanticists. Art for them must be independent, cultivated and appreciated for itself. It must not

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<sup>1</sup>Gautier, "Dans la Sierra," in Nineteenth Century French Verse, ed. by Joseph Galland and Roger Cros (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959), p. 217.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

advocate any social, or moral doctrines. Poetry is no longer subjective, personal, sentimental, but objective, impersonal and impassive. This does not mean that the poet rejects every sentiment, every emotion, but he does not want to show them. His only concern is to describe the visible and exterior world. This description is obtained through the idea of painting and plastic beauty which leads to a form which will be concise and laboured. Each poem must be a masterpiece. The idea will be incorporated in the form.<sup>1</sup>

The Parnassian movement is above all, a reaction against the weaknesses of Romanticism and notably the excess of imagination, the distortion of reality, the abuse of lyricism. One of the most notable influences of Parnassianism is: Prestige of science = the enormous influence of positivism, a philosophy created by Auguste Comte, who teaches that after the theological and metaphysical age, we arrive at the scientific age.<sup>2</sup>

The poetry and philosophy of Leconte de Lisle, leader of Parnassianism, resemble those of Vigny. For him, as for Vigny, existence is full of ugliness and suffering, and nature is indifferent. God exists only because he was created out of our fears and our hopes.<sup>3</sup> Leconte de Lisle is not impassive; he is a man who suffers profoundly, but because of his pride he refuses to express directly his despair as the

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Moreau, Le Romantisme (Paris: Les Editions Mondiales, 1957), p. 342.

<sup>2</sup>Strowski, Tableau de la littérature française au XIX Siècle (Paris: Librairie Classique, 1950), p. 389.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 422.

romanticists had done. His ideal is the stoicism of Vigny. He courageously accepts misfortune as inevitable. He condemns romantic sentimentalism:

Je ne te vendrai pas mon ivresse ou mon mal,  
 Je ne livrera pas ma vie à tes huées,  
 Je ne danserai pas sur ton tréteau banal  
 Avec tes historions et tes prostituées.<sup>1</sup>

The romantic poet is compared to the mountbank who goes from city to city exhibiting before the public his animals. The romantic poet exposes the wounds of his heart to the public in the same manner. Although Leconte de Lisle condemns romantic poetry, many examples of characteristics which are romantic, are seen in his versification. He often employs the romantic trimeter:

La chaîne au cou / hurlant au chaud / soleil d'été.<sup>1</sup>  
 Dans le silence / au loin laissant / planer ses yeux.<sup>3</sup>

This versification indicates that Parnassianism was not a complete break from Romanticism. The new movement remained romantic not only in verse form but also in subject matter, and in the expression of personal lyricism.

Leconte de Lisle is an artist who strives for perfection of form in his work. In his poetry, the composition is generally of a striking logic and clarity. The vocabulary is filled with rare and exotic words. The rime is always correct and often rich.

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<sup>1</sup>Leconte de Lisle, "Les Montreurs," in Le XIXe Siècle ed. by Lagarde and Michard (Paris: Bordas, 1966), p. 406.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 406.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

This study of the works of Stéphane Mallarmé would not be, in any sense, complete without giving consideration to Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud. The contributions they made to Symbolism are indispensable. These poets have been considered precursors of the movement which reached its climax with the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé.

Charles Baudelaire has been considered by many critics as the greatest poet that France has produced. He belongs to no poetic school but aspects of each school are seen in his works. Baudelaire cannot be classified as either romantic or Parnassian. His poetry, although contains traits and characteristics associated with both of these schools, transcends both groups and must therefore be considered separate and apart from the prevailing poetic currents.

Baudelaire approved of the perfection of form of the Parnassians, but the anguish and revolt of his tormented soul enlarged the scope of his lyricism, and influenced him to explore new possibilities of poetic expression which the symbolists later exploited.

He admires life yet he has a fear of it. From this attitude he arrives at what is called "le spleen," which is explained by the blackness of his moods:

Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle  
 Sur l'esprit gémissant en proie aux longs ennuis,  
 Et que de l'horizon embrassant tout le cercle  
 Il nous verse un jour noir plus triste que les nuits;  
 .....  
 Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,  
 Défilent lentement dans mon âme; l'Espoir,  
 Vaincu, pleure et l'Angoisse atroce, despotique,  
 Sur mon crâne incline plante son drapeau noir.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, "Spleen: Quand le Ciel Bas et Lourd" (France: Gallimard, 1857), p. 62.



Baudelaire's ideas are not expressed abstractly but through sensations, (perfumes, colors, sounds).

la nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.<sup>1</sup>

The power of Baudelaire's poetry reside in his force of suggestion:

Ma jeunesse ne fut qu'un ténébreux orage  
Traverse ça et là par de brillant soleils.<sup>2</sup>

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige  
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;  
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir.  
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige  
Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige.  
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.<sup>3</sup>

Baudelaire's personal drama was his dualism, the perpetual conflict between his aspirations toward an ideal of purity and his lower instincts, between heaven and hell. Brought up in the Catholic faith, he was obsessed with the idea of sin. Moments of hate seemed to alternate with moments of deep despair. His "spleen" is a much deeper "malaise" than the "mal du siècle:" it entailed a feeling of moral solitude, an incurable boredom, an incapacity for action, or perhaps an anguished consciousness of the miseries of life. All of these elements carried him to the verge of madness. The six parts of Les Fleurs du Mal represent the journey from life to death; they seem to retrace the tragedy of man through the poet's own experience. In his analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., "Correspondences," p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., "L'Ennemi," p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., "Harmonie du Soir," p. 98.

of his "spleen," he expresses his aspirations toward the absolute, his hopes, his set-backs, even his efforts to find happiness through poetry and love. Baudelaire appears to see the poet or perhaps himself as a stranger among men who mock, and do not understand him:

Le poète est semblable au prince des nuées  
Qui chante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;  
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.<sup>1</sup>

The poet alone, through visions of his work, has access to the higher spheres of the ideal and beauty.

Baudelaire uses a simple vocabulary, but the music, harmony and rhythm have a very evocative power. He opened a new field to the symbolist poets by his discovery of "correspondences" and by his symbolic vision of nature where all forms appear as symbols of one mysterious reality. His sonnet "Correspondences" became an inspiration for the symbolists poets. Not only did he perceive "correspondences" between the material world and the other world, he also perceived correspondences between different sensorial impressions: colors, perfumes.

It has been stated that modern poetry owes the first traces of Symbolism to Baudelaire. The term "Symbolisme" came to France to mark the consciousness of a dimension in which poetry had been implicated at least since Baudelaire with his sense of analogies and correspondences.<sup>2</sup>

Like Baudelaire, Verlaine experienced an inner struggle. He

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., "L'Albatros," p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Angelo P. Bertocci. From Symbolism to Baudelaire (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 45.

fought the battle of good and evil. He felt a need for purity, for the simple joys of life but he kept relapsing into the vulgar temptations of the flesh.

At the beginning of his poetic career, Verlaine belonged to the parnassian school. He soon detached himself from this school which he came to consider too cold and impersonal. His "Poèmes saturniens" contain poems of a personal inspiration, reflecting his sensibility, his sensuality, and his melancholy.

Je fais souvent ce rêve étrange et pénétrant  
D'une femme inconnue, et que j'aime, et qui m'aime  
Et qui m'est, chaque fois, ne tout à fait la même  
Ni tout à fait une autre, et m'aime et me comprend.<sup>1</sup>

Verlaine insisted upon the element of music in poetry, which was later adopted by the symbolists. Note the tone and rhythm of the poem "Chanson d'automne:"

Les sanglots longs  
Des violons  
De l'automne  
Blessent mon cœur  
D'une langueur  
Monotone.<sup>2</sup>

The following poem has an even better musical pitch:

O triste, triste était mon âme  
A cause, à cause d'une femme  
Je ne me suis pas consolé  
Bien que mon cœur s'en soit allé  
Bien que mon cœur, bien que mon âme  
Eussent fui loin de cette femme.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Verlaine, "Mon rêve familier," Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, 1873), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., "Chanson d'automne, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., "Romance sans paroles," p. 67.

Verlaine's verse, musical and supple, suggest a dreamlike atmosphere which is also characteristic of Symbolism.

His group of poems, "Romance sans paroles" is considered to be the best expression of his poetry. "Sagesse" represents his expression of his religious faith.

Seigneur, J'ai peur. Mon âme en moi tréssaille toute  
Je vois, je sens qu'il faut vous aimer: mais comment  
Moi, ceci, me ferais-je, ô vous, Dieu, votre amant,  
O justice que la vertu des bons redoute?<sup>1</sup>

Verlaine was not able to resist temptation long, thus he resigned himself to dividing his life between his mystical aspirations and his sensual needs.

Verlaine is at heart, a romantic, but his lyricism, is discreetly expressed. His insistence on musicality and imprecision, adopted later by the symbolist movement, brought about a revolution in versification. It should also be pointed out that "L'Art poétique" by Verlaine has been considered by many as the manifesto of the symbolist school.

What is most interesting or intriguing about Rimbaud is the short period of time he spent writing poetry. He stopped writing altogether at the age of twenty-one and spent the rest of his life traveling. At sixteen, he began to write poetry with an amazing virtuosity. It has been said that this poetry written at the age of sixteen equalled that of Victor Hugo whom he imitated.

Like Baudelaire, he tried to escape from himself by exploring the world of the unknown. He was intensely receptive to sensations. He

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., "Sagesse," p. 80.

felt that he could arrive at supreme knowledge by deliberate hallucinations, bordering on a stage of madness and experiencing in himself every form of feeling and sensation. He said that the poet must himself be a "voyant." This idea is described in "Une Saison En Enfer." "Le Bateau Ivre" relates symbolically his search for another world and his inability to follow in the foot-steps of other men.

In addition to his inner feelings of sensation he contributed much to the symbolist movement. His poem "Voyelles" has been imitated by Mallarmé.

A noir, E blanc, i rouge, u vert, O bleu: voyelles,  
Je dira; quelque jour vos naissances latentes:<sup>1</sup>

Mallarmé's idea of having symbols to represent a certain language originated from Rimbaud's "Voyelles."

Rimbaud's "Illuminations" represent a further attempt to create a new world and a new language. There are hallucinatory images, audacious transpositions of sensations and even some elements which escape analysis. Rimbaud tried to discover rarer correspondences between different sensations and to create a poetic language which would appeal to all the senses. As a creator of a new form of poetry, Rimbaud's place is very high and his influence is great among the symbolist poets.

In romantic poetry, sensibility and imagination dominate. Parnassian poetry is inspired by the discoveries of science. The Parnassians criticize the romantic display of the "Moi" and demand an impersonal poetry in which the expression of certain sentiments in the author are expressed with discretion.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., "Les Voyelles," p. 90.

After having pointed out the dominate characteristics of the two schools, Romanticism and Parnassianism, the basic difference of each can easily be seen. The romantic poets wrote for personal relief or to express ideas about humanity. They rebelled against society and placed emphasis on the individual. On the contrary, the Parnassians were only concerned with perfection of form. They did not involve themselves with society but were only interested in producing what they called a true and pure art.

There are many factors which indicate that Parnassianism was not a complete break with Romanticism. Not only did the Parnassians remain romantic in verse form but also in many instances in subject matter. In regards to lyric poetry of the nineteenth century, the Romantics, the Parnassians, and the Symbolists, would span the entire period. Accordingly, a number of romantic poets were writing during the period of the Parnassians. At the same time, the Parnassian movement originated at a moment when Romanticism was at its peak. This would indicate that one school has to be influenced by the other, as far as acquiring characteristics of the preceeding group. Parnassianism, therefore, is not a complete break with Romanticism but rather a continuation of the Romantic school along with its own distinct characteristics. These romantic-parnassian elements continue into Symbolism, and the works of Stéphane Mallarmé seem to be a synthesis of the preceeding schools.

In the following chapter an effort will be made to prove and illustrate this proposition.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LIFE OF STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

Although Stéphane Mallarmé is one of France's most noted poets, his childhood or adolescence was not filled with many exciting events. He was born in Paris on March 18, 1842. His father, like his grandfather before him, was a civil servant in the Registry. His mother died accidentally upon returning from a trip when he was five. Young Stéphane threw himself on the floor and tore his hair after hearing the news. Afterwards his grandmother took charge of his education.<sup>1</sup>

Stéphane was sent, at the age of ten, to a boarding school in Auteuil. It was a Catholic school, attended by "society" children, and the boy felt ill at ease. He tried very hard to escape the contemptuous teasing and blows of his classmates by exchanging his commoners' name for a more flattering one and claiming to be the "Count of Boulainvillers." This first contact with society gave him an inferiority complex. The effects of this association with society were seen shortly thereafter: He withdrew into himself, his teachers complained that he was "vain and rebellious," and his grandmother noted sadly that his character was becoming touchy and aggressive.<sup>2</sup>

At fifteen another trial awaited him: the death of his sister,

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<sup>1</sup> Guy Michaud, Mallarmé (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Mauron, Introduction to the Psychoanalysis of Mallarmé (California: University of California Press, 1963), p. 10.

Maria, confidante of his childhood joys. The memory of this incident seemed to have remained with him throughout his life. As soon as his baccalaureate was over, he took a job with the Registry at Sens. The year 1861 brought about his first literary encounter, an introduction to the poetry of Baudelaire had been published and Mallarmé became an ardent admirer of this "poète maudit," Mallarmé was also an admirer of Edgar A. Poe and had thought of translating some of his works into French. He often referred to him as his "grand master" in poetry. Hoping for a better understanding of Poe, he studied English for several months. The following year in 1862, Mallarmé left for England where he had obtained a teaching position. He had hoped that this trip would perfect his knowledge of the language. While in England he wrote "Brise Marine" and "les Fenêtres."<sup>1</sup> It is also in England where he married Marie. This marriage brought him many difficulties, especially the birth of a child in less than a year.

After leaving England, Mallarmé went to Tournon where he was employed at the Imperial College of Tournon. It was during this period that he became obsessed by "L'Azur." Here he suffers from the cruel disease of impotency, flees from the blue that is torturing him and invokes the mists to help him escape.<sup>2</sup>

The year 1874 finds Mallarmé in Besançon. It is during this period that he published "Toast Funèbre," hommage to the memory of

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<sup>1</sup> Naskel M. Black, Mallarmé and the Symbolist Drama (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1963), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



Théophile Gautier, and "Le Tombeau d'Edgar A. Poe."<sup>1</sup>

According to some authors, Symbolism had its beginning in 1885 when a group of poets including Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Laforgue published La Revue Wagnérienne. Later Stéphane Mallarmé became the leader of the school.

It has been said that Mallarmé remained unappreciated until approximately 1884. He owes much of literary fame to Verlaine and Huysman who revealed Mallarmé's poetry to the public in their "poètes maudits" and "A Rebours" respectively.<sup>2</sup> Later the Symbolist school makes him their leader and every Tuesday a group of his disciples assembled around him to admire his poetry and to discuss poetic theory.

With the passage of time, the greatness of the poetry of Mallarmé has become more and more apparent. The publication of a number of volumes of collected writings, letters, texts, biographical and critical interpretations serves to call attention to the enduring significance of the poet's art. Mallarmé's achievement resides not only in the intrinsic richness and vitality of his poems, but also in the continuity of theory and expression since his time which testifies to his central role among the makers of modern literature.<sup>3</sup>

Although Stéphane Mallarmé was the father of Symbolism, an attempt will be made to prove that his works represent a synthesis of Romanticism and of Parnassianism. His romantic temperament is seen during

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Mauron, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Black, op. cit., p. 5.

his childhood and adolescent years, although parnassian traits were developed a little later. Stéphane Mallarmé has been considered by many as the last of the romantic poets.

One could very easily cite many romantic tendencies in the early life of Mallarmé. Perhaps the first are seen in his initial contact with society at the Catholic School. When he began to withdraw to himself, he seemed to have been seeking an escape, which appeared to him, from a hostile world. This could be the beginning of his world of dreams. A few years later the death of his sister Maria only brought him a profound feeling of loneliness. He seemed to have been unusually attached to his sister. Perhaps there was an unconscious fusion of the two deaths, that of his mother and of his sister. Having lost his mother at such an early age, it is quite possible that, unconsciously, Mallarmé loved the mother through the daughter. The image of the poet's dead sister is seen either directly or indirectly in many of his works. It seems as if Mallarmé never recovered from either the death of his mother or that of his sister. This denial of death not only contributes to his imagination but also to his idealization which isolates him from the social milieu and develops into internal images.

When he was about twenty, Mallarmé spoke of the death of his sister as having occurred unexpectedly five years before; he saw it, at that time, as an event of some significance for his inner life. Maria was only a child when she died. This does not mean that a brother cannot be affected for a considerable time by the death of a sister just reaching adolescence, but it does appear extraordinary that this brother, already grown, already a great poet, would attach so much importance

to the death of this child sister, and that it would affect and influence his literary tendencies.

Mallarmé associated many things with his sister, Maria, even the lives and deaths of other people. Ettie Yapp, wife of Maspero, friend of Mallarmé, represented in life the ideal of Mallarmé's sister Maria. Then after the death of Ettie, Mallarmé wrote the famous sonnet: "Pour Votre Chère Morte,"

Sur les bois oubliés quand passe l'hiver sombre  
Tu te plains, ô captif solitaire du seuil,  
Que ce sépulcre à deux qui fera notre orgueil  
Hélas du manque seul ces lourdes bouquets s'encombre.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that Mallarmé was writing for Maspero, he was also writing for himself and his dear dead sister.

It has been said that there are really two contradictory beings in Mallarmé: one warm, passionate, overflowing with enthusiasm and lyricism; the other cold, self doubting, withdrawn, exacting and avid. For Mallarmé there are two worlds, the one we live in and the ideal. To be content with the former and its illusions of happiness is an act of cowardice. To flee it by any route is thus an act of courage. These two groups of tendencies enable one to see the possibility of Mallarmé's being a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism. They also correspond to the double postulation of which Baudelaire speaks. In addition, Mallarmé owes his taste for density, his cult of poetic creation and his conviction of its religious and quasi-mystical value to Baudelaire. He was also influenced by Gautier's obsession with the

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<sup>1</sup>Stéphane Mallarmé, "Pour Votre Chère Morte," Oeuvres Complètes (France: Librairie Gallimard, 1885), p. 245). (Unless otherwise indicated all quotations of Mallarmé's works are from this volume).

ideal and the blue.<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé felt that these two poets were not only dear to him but in each one, he recognized elements of himself.

Mallarmé's religion has also influenced his poetry. His religion seemed both to exclude God and to affirm his belief in something "divine." Beyond the daily world of contingency, chance, and illusion, he had discovered the existence of a higher world, a "spiritual universe" which he called, religion. Throughout his poetry, Mallarmé searches for the unattainable ideal which resembles the Parnassian idea of perfection. At the same time his lyricism corresponds to Romanticism.<sup>2</sup>

Mallarmé's life is unique in the degree to which it unfolds like a dialogue or a struggle between inner and external reality. The life of his sister and the trial of life itself represent the external reality. After the death of Maria, he only has the cold reality of life which forces him to withdraw into his inner self. All of these elements of Mallarmé's life are seen in his poetry.

Analyses of poems of Mallarmé in the following chapter will present evidence to prove the proposition that his poetry represents a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism.

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Mondor, Mallarmé Lycéen (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Mondor, Mallarmé (Suisse: Pierre Gailler, 1947), p. 65.

### CHAPTER III

#### AN ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE WORKS OF STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

The aim of symbolism was not to discuss ideas, express sentiments, or to describe the exterior world, as the Romanticists and Parnassians had done. The symbolist poets wanted, above all, to describe the interior mind, the profound secrets of psychological life, the concerns of the mysterious "infini." The symbolist poet evokes this mysterious world by developing new processes and notably those from symbols which strive to establish correspondences among the different perceptions of our senses (colors, forms, sound, perfumes). This new poetry of sensation is purely intellectual. It is characterized by le mystère, la suggestion, le surréel, l'épanchement du rêve, les correspondances, but the key word describing symbolism is la musique. A poem for the symbolists becomes a sort of symphony, having a fundamental theme which the author, in the manner of a musician, must orchestrate his ideas. Mallarmé, increasingly employed a vocabulary that he created, a repository of images which, in his mind, had acquired an eminent value, corresponding to the many and complex networks to which he alone possessed the key.

Even though Symbolism has its own distinct characteristics, there still remain elements of Romanticism and Parnassianism expressed in symbolist poetry. These romantic and parnassian elements will be pointed out and discussed in the analyses of the following works of Stéphane Mallarmé: "Les Fenêtres," "L'Apparition," "L'Azur,"

"Hérodiade," "Toast Funèbre," "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," and "Le Vierge, le Vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui."

Las du triste hôpital, et d l'encens fétide  
Qui monte en la blancheur banale des rideaux  
Vers le grand crucifix ennuyé du mur vide,  
Le moribond sournois y redresse un vieux dos,

Se traîne et va, moins pour chauffer sa pourriture  
Que pour voir du soleil sur les pierres, coller  
Les poils blancs et les os de la maigre figure  
Aux fenêtres qu'un beau rayon clair veut hâler,

Et la bouche, fiévreuse et d'azur bleu vorace,  
Telle, jeune, elle alla respirer son trésor,  
Une peau virginale et de jadis encrasse  
D'un long baiser amer les tièdes carreaux d'or.

Ivre, il vit, oubliant l'horreur des saintes huiles,  
Les tisanes, l'horloge et le lit infligé,  
La toux; et quand le soir saigne parmi les tuiles,  
Son oeil, à l'horizon de lumière gorgé,

Voit des galères d'or, belles comme des cygnes,  
Sur un fleuve de pourpre et de parfums dormir  
En berçant l'éclair fauve et riche de leurs lignes  
Dans un grand nonchaloir charge de souvenir!

Ainsi, pris du dégoût de l'homme à l'âme dure  
Vautré dans le bonheur, où ses seuls appétits  
Mangent, et qui s'entête à chercher cette ordure  
Pour l'offrir à la femme allaitant ses petits,

Je fuis et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées  
D'où l'on tourne l'épaule à la vie, et, béni,  
Dans leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,  
Que dore le matin chaste de l'infini

Je me mire et me vois ange et je meurs, et j'aime  
Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité  
A renaître, portant mon rêve en diadème,  
Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté

Mais, hélas Ici-bas est maître: sa hantise  
Vient m'écoeurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sur,  
Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise  
Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'asur.

Est-t-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,  
D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté

Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume  
 Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité?<sup>1</sup>

The poem is written in the alexandrine line. The majority of the lines are alexandrin classique with a césure following the sixth syllable.

Las du triste hôpital / et de l'encens fétide  
 En berçant l'éclair fauve / et riche de leurs lignes  
 Vautré dans le bonheur / où ses seuls appétits.

There are also a few examples of the romantic trimeter:

Mais, hélas / ici-bas est maître: / sa hantise  
 Est-il moyen / Moi qui connais / l'amertume,  
 Les tisanes, / l'horloge / et le lit infligé,

"Les Fenêtres" is a poem of ten verses and the rime is croisées.

There are no examples of weak rime, only rich and sufficient:

Vorace-encrasse, huiles-tuiles, cygnes-lignes,  
 J'aime-diadème, hantise-bêtise, sur-l'Azur.

The poem can be divided into four parts. The first three verses present the setting of the poem. A sick man drags himself to the window yearning for sunlight. The window and the enclosed room prevent his escape to the outside world. He is weary of the triteness of the hospital and an empty room which imprison him.

Las du triste hôpital, et de l'encens fétide  
 Qui monte en la blancheur banale des rideaux  
 Vers le grand crucifix ennuyé du mur vide,  
 Le moribond sournois y redresse un vieux dos.

The fourth and fifth verses constitute the second part of the poem. The sick man remains at the window. For a while, he forgets about his illness and the hospital as he stares into the horizon. At this point, he seems to be dreaming or having an illusion:

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, "Les Fenêtres," p. 508.

Voit des galères d'or, belles comme des Cygnes,  
 Sur un fleuve de pourpre et de parfum dormir  
 En bercant l'éclair fauve et riche de leurs lignes  
 Dans un grand nonchaloir charge de souvenir.

Perhaps it is not a dream. It is quite possible that he is recalling the time of his good health which made him free. The sixth and seventh verses make up the third part of the poem. Here begins the comparison between the poet and the sick man. The poet wishes to flee human mediocrity into the anterior world where beauty flourishes.

Je fuis et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées  
 D'où l'on tourne l'épaule à la vie, et, béni,  
 Dans leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,  
 Que dore le matin chaste de l'infini.

The last part of the poem is composed of the last three verses. The poet becomes more and more disgusted at his inability to reach his ideal. The window is representative of whiteness, clearness and sterility, and of his impotency to go beyond his mediocrity.

Je me mire et me vois ange et je meurs, et j'aime  
 Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité  
 A renaître, pourtant mon rêve en diadème  
 Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté.

Finally he realizes that he is not total master of himself. "Mais, hélas ici-bas est maître:"

Although he is haunted by the ideal, his inability forces him to forget it.

Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise  
 Me force à me boucner le nez devant l'azur.

In the last verse, one sees the poet's uncertainty in regards to his ideal. After endless attempts to obtain the ideal he wonders about the possibility of it. "Est-il moyen, Ô moi qui connais l'amertume." He wants to know if he will be able to reach the ideal



through another means other than writing.

Est-il moyen, Ô moi qui connais l'amertume,  
D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté  
Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume  
Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité.

Although one could not pick out certain parnassian elements, the poem is representative of the school because of its condensed form. Unlike the romanticists, every word that Mallarmé uses is essential to the basic composition of the poem. He is accurate and to the point.

"Les Fenêtres" is basically romantic for a number of reasons. It is a simile and is entirely symbolic. A sick man is compared to the poet, Mallarmé himself. From the beginning the poem starts with an impersonal air. But beginning with the seventh verse, one sees that it is no longer impersonal. Note the use of the first person single.

Je suis et je m'accroche, je me mire, et je me  
vois ange je meurs et j'aime.

Although the poem could refer, universally, to any person unable to obtain a desired goal but the use of je lets the reader know that it is Mallarmé who is being compared to the sick man. The poem also has a romantic melancholy mood. Note the use of words like:

triste, fétide, crucifix ennuyé, vorace, l'horreur,  
dégout, and ordure.

There are also certain images in this poem that would remind us of romantic poetry.

Le soir saigne parmi les tuiles  
Voit des galères d'or, belles comme des cygnes,  
Sur un fleuve pourpre été de parfum dormir.

Notice at the same time elements of Symbolism, especially as represented in some of Mallarmé's symbols.

Blancheur represents not only the poets' sterility but also

whiteness and his inability to accomplish his goal.

Azur represents the ideal and the unattainable. Most representative of all the symbolist elements is the Cygne who occurs in many of the author's works.

"Les Fenêtres" was written while Mallarmé was in London in 1863. For Mallarmé, there are two worlds, the one we live in and the ideal world. To be content with the former and its illusions of happiness is cowardice. To flee it by any route is thus an act of courage. To want to flee it, is not to leave physically but to open one's eyes, to be capable of seeing the sky of the ideal above the ceiling of happiness. Here one sees the presence of a double obsession in Mallarmé; that of a room and a ceiling which closes it and that of the sky which is beyond.

The poem is a comparison between a dying man endeavoring to escape the horror of the sad hospital through visions of the setting sun.

Where "Les Fenêtres" is basically romantic, "L'Apparition" the following poem, leans more toward Parnassianism, because of the long months of meditation and time spent doing research on most of the words in the poem.

La lune s'attristait. Des sérâphins en pleurs  
 Rêvant, l'archet aux doigts, dans le calme des fleurs  
 Vaporeuses, tiraient de mourantes violes  
 De blancs sanglots glissant sur l'azur des corolles.  
 -C'était le jour béni de ton premier baiser.  
 Ma songerie, aimant à me martyriser,  
 S'enivrait savamment du parfum de tristesse  
 Que même sans regret et sans déboire laisse  
 La cueillaison d'un Rêve au coeur qui l'a cueilli.  
 J'errais donc, l'oeil rivé sur le pavé vieilli,  
 Quand avec du soleil aux cheveux, dans la rue  
 Et dans le soir, tu m'es en riant apparue  
 Et j'ai cru voir la fée au chapeau de clarté  
 Qui jadis sur mes beaux sommeils d'enfant gâté

Passait, Laissant toujours de ses mains mal fermées  
Neiger de blancs bouquets d'étoiles parfumées.<sup>1</sup>

"L'Apparition" is a poem of sixteen alexandrine lines. The rime is plate and is basically sufficient, no weak and only one rich: Pleurs-Fleurs. All of the alexandrine lines are classique with one exception. "Qui jadis / sur mes beaux sommeils / d'enfant gâté."

The poem is no more than a description of a situation and there are no distinct divisions. Although one can make a distinction between certain lines.

The first four lines introduce the poem with a very sad mood.

Des séraphins en pleurs, le calme des fleurs,  
de mourantes violes de blancs sanglots.

The next four lines begin with reference to a particular day. "Le jour béni de ton premier baiser."

Perhaps he refers to the first kiss shared between Ettie and Calazis since the poem is written for Calazis in remembrance of Ettie, a young woman with whom he was in love. Then Mallarmé speaks of a certain sadness in reminiscing over the past. "Ma songerie s'enivrait savamment du parfum de tristesse." It is speculative here that Mallarmé also has in mind the remembrance of his sister Maria and his mother. In the last eight lines, we find that all these events appear to the poet like a dream. "La cueillaison d'un Rêve au coeur qui l'a cueilli."

Then he has an illusion. As he walks, he imagines that someone appears to him. It seems here again that he confuses Ettie with his

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, "L'Apparition," p. 35.

sister.

Et j'ai cru voir la fée au chapeau de clarté  
Qui jadis sur mes beau sommeils d'enfant gâté.

First he sees a fairy who was formerly a spoiled child. The fairy represents the woman, Ettie and Marie, the child.

It has been stated that Mallarmé exhibits in this poem, an ease and grace he never found again. Not only does this poem contain elements of Parnassian exactness, it is at the same time, romantic in composition. As the romantics, it begins with references of nature:

La lune s'attristait, le calme des fleur,  
de mourantes violes, l'azur des corolles.

These descriptions of nature begin the melancholy mood which persists throughout the poem. After these descriptions, the poet presents the situation and his relationship to it. Then in the end nature seems to share his moods.

Avec du soleil aux cheveux, tu m'es apparue dans le soir,  
ses mains neiger de blancs bouquets d'étoiles parfumées.

The poem is also romantic because of the personal element. It represents a veiled allusion to Mallarmé's own love, mingled with a voluptuous sadness. It seems as if, perhaps subconsciously, he confuses the young Ettie, with not only his own sister but his mother as well.

Mallarmé had said, before writing "L'Apparition" that he did not want this poem to be the result of sheer inspiration. He wanted to meditate and to do research for the work. This poem, because of the care given to it by its author is representative of the Parnassian perfection.

Notice the continual use of words throughout the poem containing

the sound [a]

Rêvant, dans, blancs, sanglots, glissants, aimant,  
Savamment, parfum, sans, quand, dans, riant, laissant.

The rime is rich and sufficient. There is no weak rime.

Pleurs-fleurs, tristesse-laissee, fermées-parfumées  
clarte-gate, violes corolles.

Mallarmé constantly employs the sound [ɛ]

S'attristait, tiraient, c'était, baiser, s'enivrait,  
Laisse, j'errais, passait, laissant.

The repetition of this sound adds unity to the poem. Not only does the poem express Parnassian perfection, it represents the musical tone of Symbolism.

The poem is different not only because of the brevity of the first sentence but because it also contains sixteen lines.

There are also examples of consonance: "Ma songerie, aimant à me martyriser." Note also examples of alliteration: "La cueillaison d'un Rêve au coeur qui l'a cueilli."

To give the poem even more unity and coherence, the author fills it with internal rime:

J'errais donc. l'oeil rivé sur le pavé vieilli  
Neiger de blancs bouquets d'étoiles parfumées.

This poem is considered by many as the most representative of Parnassianism of all the works of Stéphane Mallarmé. A friend of Mallarmé's, Cazalis, had asked him to write some lines in honor of Ettie, a lovely young Englishwoman with whom he was madly in love. Mallarmé answered, "Let me have enough time. I don't want this to be written from sheer inspiration; lyricism's turbulence would not be worthy of this chaste apparition you love. Long meditation is necessary; only

art, limpid, and impeccable, is chaste enough to sculpt her precisely."<sup>1</sup> Finally, after long months and repeated entreaties from Cazalis, the poem "L'Apparition" was published.

"L'Apparition" is quite similar to "L'Azur," the poem which follows, not only because they were written about the same time but also because in both, Mallarmé is concerned with perfection. Both are representative of Parnassian influence.

De l'éternel Azur la sereine ironie  
Accable, belle indolemment comme les fleurs,  
Le poète impuissant qui maudit son génie  
A travers un desert stérile de Douleurs.

Fuyant, les yeux fermés, je le sens qui regarde  
Avec l'intensité d'un remords atterrant,  
Mon âme vide. Où fuir? Et quelle nuit hagarde  
Jeter, lambeaux, jeter sur ce mépris navrant?

Brouillards, montez! Versez vos cendres monotones  
Avec de longs haillons de brume dans les cieux  
Qui noiera le marais livide des automnes  
Et bâtissez un grand plafond silencieux!

Et toi, sors des étangs léthéens et ramasse  
En t'en venant vase et les pales roseaux,  
Cher Ennui, pour boucher d'une main jamais lasse  
Les grands trous bleus que font méchamment les oiseaux.

Encor! que sans répit les tristes cheminées  
Fument, et que de suie une errante prison  
Eteigne dans l'horreur de ses noires traînées  
Le soleil se mourant jaunâtre à l'horizon!

Le Ciel est mort. Vers toi, j'accours! donne, ô matière,  
L'oubli de l'Idéal cruel et du péché  
A ce martyr qui vient partager la litière  
Où le bétail heureux des hommes est couche,

Car j'y veux, puisque enfin ma cervelle, vidée  
Comme le pot de fard gisant au pied d'un mur,  
N'a plus l'art d'attifer la sanglotante idée,  
Lugubrement bâiller vers un trépas obscur...

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<sup>1</sup>

Michaud, op. cit., p. 20.

En vain! l'Azur triomphe, et je l'entends qui chante  
 Dans les cloches. Mon âme, il se fait voix pour plus  
 Nous faire peur avec sa victoire méchante,  
 Et du métal vivante sort en bleus angélus!

Il roule par la brume, ancien et traverse  
 Ta native agonie ainsi qu'un glaive sur;  
 Où fuir dans la révolte inutile et perverse?  
 Je suis hanté. L'Azur! L'Azur! L'Azur! L'Azur!<sup>1</sup>

"L'Azur" is written in the Alexandrine line. There are examples of both the alexandrine classique and of the trimeter.

#### Classique

Avec l'intensité / d'un remords atterrant  
 Avec de longs haillons / de brume dans les cieux  
 Il roule par le brume / ancien et traverse.

#### Trimeter

Mon âme vide / Ou fuir? / Et quelle nuit hagarde  
 Brouillards, / Montez / versez vos cendres monotones  
 En vain / l'Azur triomphe, / et je l'entends qui chante.

There is also one example of the pentameter: "Je suis hanté / l'Azur! / l'Azur! / l'Azur! / l'Azur!" "L'Azur" is a poem of nine verses and the rime is croisées. There are seven divisions to the poems because almost every verse presents a different idea. The first verse gives the reader two basic words which can be used to summarize the entire poem: Poète impuissant. This "poète impuissant" can refer to any poet but in the second verse, one sees that it is in reference to the poet, Stéphane Mallarmé. He tries to escape l'Azur, which represents symbolically the ideal, but he does not know where to hide.

Fuyant, les yeux fermés, je le sens qui regarde  
 Avec l'intensité d'un remords atterrant,  
 Mon âme vide. O fuir? Et quelle nuit hagarde  
 Jeter, lambeau, jeter sur ce mépris navrant?

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, "L'Azur," p. 50.

In his attempt to flee from l'Azur, he invokes the fog, wishing for something similar to a great misty day that would shelter him from l'Azur.

Brouillards, montez! versez vos cendres monotones  
Avec de longs haillons de brume dans les cieux  
Que noiera le marais des automnes  
Et bâtissez un grand plafond silencieux.

In the fourth verse he addresses anxiety and asks it to bring water from the river of lethe. According to Greek mythology, it is a river of hades whose water causes forgetfulness of the past in those who drink it. Perhaps this idea expresses his desire to forget his ideal of perfection in writing poetry.

Et toi, sors des étangs léthéens et ramasse  
En t'en venant la vase et les pales roseaux,  
Cher Ennui, Pour boucher d'une main jamais lasse  
Les grands trous bleus que font méchamment les oiseaux.

In the fifth verse, the poet, fleeing from "l'Azur," is compared to a prisoner. "Une errante prison éteigne dans l'horreur de ses noires traînées." He says the sky is dead, meaning that he still remains a prisoner enclosed by his ideal. Mallarmé is faced with the problem of wanting to create yet he is unable to.

The seventh verse begins with the poet's realization that not only has he not reached his ideal perfection in poetry but neither does he write with the same vigor as before:

ma cervelle vidée  
.....  
N'a plus l'art d'attifer la sanglotante idée.

Finally, he knows that it is impossible to obtain or overcome his ideal, thus he says: "L'Azur triomphe." For Mallarmé there is no escape. It is useless to flee: "Je suis hanté, l'Azur! l'Azur! l'Azur! l'Azur!"



Before giving a complete summary of the poem, notice some of the images expressed in it. The poet is so obsessed with his ideal that it is almost worshipped by him. It is compared to flowers:

De l'éternel Azure le sereine ironie  
Accable, belle indolemment comme des fleurs.

Verse three begins with a beautiful metaphor. Fog and mist are compared with the dusty appearance of ashes:

Brouillards, montez! versez vos cendres monotones  
Avec de longs haillons de brume dans les cieux.

In the seventh verse, the poet compares his brain or capability to a pot of paint. Here one sees the inability of the paint to act or to move and if it moves, it can never go up, only down. "Comme le pot de fard gisant au pied d'un mur."

"L'Azur" is not only romantic by nature of its ideal but there are words contained in this poem which are frequently used by the romanticists:

Âme vide, fuir, ennui, triste, errante, agonie,  
hanté, trépas obscur.

It also contains several images which are similar to those expressed by the romanticists.

Brouillards, montez! versez vos cendres monotones  
Avec de longs haillons de brume dans les cieux  
Qui noiera le marais livide des automnes  
Et bâtissez un grand plafond silencieux!  
.....  
Le soleil se mourant jaunâtre à l'horizon.

"L'Azur" is also romantic in that Mallarmé speaks of himself. It is his own incapability which haunts him. He searches for the ideal, that of poetic perfection of which he dreams.

Le poète impuissant qui maudit son génie  
A travers un desert stérile de douleurs.

"L'Azur" which haunts and torments the poet, symbolizes the ideal beauty which he tries to obtain by artistic creation. "L'Azur" represents an interior struggle which brings out the romantic lyricism in Mallarmé. He becomes a helpless prey of an obsession. The obsession which leads to the Romanticism in this poem is the same obsession which leads to Parnassianism. Mallarmé writes to his friend Cazalis:

Je te jure qu'il n'y a pas un mot qui ne m'ait coûté plusieurs heures de recherche, et que le premier mot, qui revêt la première idée, outre qu'il tend lui-même à l'effet général du poème, sert encore à préparer le dernier.<sup>1</sup>

"L'Azur" is the opposite of "les Fenêtres." With "L'Azur," Mallarmé aspires to join the promise-filled blue but with "Les Fenêtres" he seeks to flee it.

After "L'Azur," Mallarmé wrote two poems "Angoisse" and "Tristesse d'été" (both of which are romantic in subject matter) before beginning "Hérodiade" in 1864. The following year, 1865, Mallarmé also began "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." At this time Mallarmé was about twenty-two and in his late adolescence. It is said that he had begun to drop many of the Parnassian influences. This he might have done, but many romantic qualities still remained with him, as will be pointed out in a summary of "Hérodiade" and "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" at the end of the chapter.

In 1871, Mallarmé wrote "Toast Funèbre" which is quite different from his preceding poems. Its theme is the death of Théophile Gautier, father of Symbolism. Because he had not written for six years, the poem is said to be his return to poetry.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry A. Grubbs and Kneller, Introduction à la poésie française (London: Blasdel P. Blushing Company, 1962), p. 200.

O de notre bonheur, toi, le fatal emblème  
 Salut de la démence et libation blême,  
 Ne crois pas qu'au magique espoir du corridor  
 J'offre ma coupe vide ou souffre un monstre d'or!  
 Ton apparition ne va pas me suffire:  
 Car je t'ai mis, moi-même, en un lieu de porphyre.  
 Le rite est pour les mains d'éteindre le flambeau  
 Contre le fer épais des portes du tombeau:  
 Et l'on ignore mal, élu pour notre fête  
 Très simple de chanter l'absence du poète,  
 Que ce beau monument l'enferme tout entier:  
 Si ce n'est que la gloire ardente du métier,  
 Jusqu'à l'heure commune et vile de la cendre,  
 Par le carreau qu'allume un soir fier d'y descendre,  
 Retourne vers les feux du pur soleil mortel!

Magnifique, total et solitaire, tel  
 Tremble de s'exhaler le faux orgueil des hommes.  
 Cette foule hagarde! elle annonce: Nous sommes  
 La triste opacité de nos spectres futurs.  
 Mais le balson des deuils épars sur de vains murs  
 J'ai méprisé l'horruer lucide d'une larme,  
 Quand sourd même à mon vers sacré qui ne l'alarme,  
 Quelqu'un de ces passants, fier, aveugle et, muet,  
 Hôte de son linceul vague, se transmuait  
 En le vierge héros de l'attente posthume.  
 Vaste gouffre apporte dans l'amas de la brume  
 Par l'irascible vent des mots qu'il n'a pas dits,  
 Le néant à cet Homme aboli de jadis:  
 Souvenirs d'horizons, qu'est-ce Ô toi, que la Terre?  
 Hurle ce songe; et, voix dont la clarté s'altère,  
 L'espace a pour jouet le cri" Je ne sais pas!

Le Maître par un oeil profond, a sur ses pas,  
 Apaisé de l'Éden l'inquiète merveille  
 Dont le frisson final, dans sa voix seule, éveille  
 Pour la Rose et le lys le mystère d'un nom  
 Est-il de ce destin rien qui demeure, non?  
 O vous tous, oubliez une croyance sombre.  
 Le splendide génie éternel n'a pas d'ombre.  
 Moi, de votre désir soucieux, je veux voir,  
 A qui s'évanouit, hier, dans le devoir  
 Idéal que nous font les jardins de cet astre,  
 Survivre pour l'honneur du tranquille désastre  
 Une agitation solennelle par l'air  
 De paroles, pourpre ivre et grand calice clair,  
 Que, pluie et diamant, le regard diaphane  
 Reste la sur ces fleurs dont nulle ne se fane,  
 Isole parmi l'heure et le rayon du jour!  
 C'est de nos vrais bosquets de ja tout le se jour,  
 Ou le poète pur a pour geste humble et large

De l'interdire au rêve, ennemi de sa charge:  
 Afin que le matin de son repos altier,  
 Quand la mort ancienne est comme pour Gautier  
 De n'ouvrir pas les yeux sacrés et de se taire,  
 Surgisse, de l'allée ornement tributaire,  
 Le sépulcre solide ou git tout ce qui nuit,  
 Et l'avare silence et la massive nuit.<sup>1</sup>

"Toast Funèbre" is written differently from the preceding poems. First Mallarmé addresses Gautier in one single line. "O de notre bonheur, toi, le fatal emblème."

Then we have the divisions of the poem in the next three parts. The first is composed of fourteen lines. The second part has sixteen lines and the third has twenty-five lines. As his other works, the poem is written in the alexandrine line. The rime is plate.

In the first part of the poem, Mallarmé speaks directly to Gautier. Gautier had been for Mallarmé, one of the greatest masters of poetry. He had also been profoundly influenced by him. The funeral rites for Gautier represent Mallarmé's last means of showing respect and honor to a great man. He says that his purpose is to sing the absence of the poet. Perhaps he wishes to say that although dead, Gautier will live forever through the glory of his works.

Le rite est pour les mains d'éteindre le flambeau  
 Contre le fer épais des portes du tombeau:  
 Et l'on ignore mal, élu pour notre fête  
 Très-simple de changer l'absence du poète.

In the next sixteen lines the poet compares Gautier to ordinary men. "Magnifique, total et solitaire." Such qualities are absent in ordinary men. He also speaks of the falsity of these men: "J'ai méprisé l'horreur lucide d'une larme." This line also represents the

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, "Toast Funèbre," p. 65.

stoicism in Mallarmé. He scorns false sentiment represented by a tear. He cannot understand how these men can be moved by Gautier's death when they are not moved by the poetry that he writes.

Quand, sourd même à mon vers sacré qui ne l'alarme  
Quelqu'un de ces passants, fier, aveugle et muet.

In the last part of the poem, Mallarmé refers to Gautier as the master and it seems as if he visualizes his friend and master in heaven.

Le maître, par un oeil profond, a sur ses pas  
Apaisé de l'édén; inquiète merveille  
Dont le frisson final, dans sa voix seule, éveille  
Pour la Rose et le lys le mystère d'un nom.

Then Mallarmé poses the question whether anything remains after death. Speaking to the public, he says that Gautier lives through his poetry.

Moi, de votre désir soucieux, je veux voir,  
A qui s'évanouit, hier, dans le devoir  
Idéal que nous font les jardins de cet astre,  
Survivre pour l'honneur du tranquille désastre  
Une agitation solennelle par l'air  
De paroles, pourpre ivre et grand calice clair,  
Que, pluie et diamant, le regard diaphane  
Reste la sur ces fleurs dont nulle ne se fane.

This is a very solemn work. The occasion called for it: the death of Théophile Gautier, much admired by Mallarmé. The dead Gautier is addressed with absolute modern unsentimentality. He is a symbol of all horrid mortality.<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé begins by addressing Gautier:

O de notre bonheur, toi, le fatal emblème  
Salut de la démence et libation blême,  
Ne crois pas qu'au magique espoir du corridor  
J'offre ma coupe vide où souffre un monstre d'or!

The poet knows there will be no material resurrection of his

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<sup>1</sup>Henri Mondor, Stéphane Mallarmé (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1945), p. 102.

master. As a sort of imaginary pallbearer, he has personally seen the remains of Gautier put away for good in the tomb:

Ton apparition ne va pas me suffire,  
Car je t'ai mis, moi-même en un lieu de porphyre.

These lines symbolize not only the end of Gautier's literary career but the end of the poet's life as well. Material hands have done their part in extinguishing the torches of hope against the uncompromising doors of the tomb.

Et l'on ignore mal, élu pour notre fête  
Très simple de changer l'absence du poète  
Que ce beau monument l'enferme tout entier.

These lines express the true essence of the poem. Mallarmé prefers to believe that Gautier is not dead but is only absent.

Mallarmé perhaps had himself in mind as much as Gautier when he expressed with such delicate care his wish that the dead poet, and his poetry should enjoy renown. With this idea in mind, one sees the romantic element of the poet speaking of himself through someone else. Even though the apparent theme is Gautier's death, behind all of this one sees not only Mallarmé, but also every poet of whom Gautier is a symbol. "O de notre bonheur, toi, le fatal emblème." "Toast Funèbre" is a poem of radiant density, heavy with ten years of experience and meditation.<sup>1</sup>

Mallarmé does not hope to resurrect the dead and bring back his shadow. His poem is actually a song of the absence of a poet, Théophile Gautier. He realizes that Gautier is really dead and only lives

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<sup>1</sup> E. Nouet, Vingt poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1967), p. 93.

through his glory. Mallarmé also contrasts the dead poet with living beings. In the final section of the poem, Mallarmé endeavors to show the meaning of Gautier's works.

Stéphane Mallarmé wrote a number of poems about the deaths of poets. They were poets whom he profoundly admired and by whom he had been greatly influenced. Like the romanticists, he was obsessed with or fascinated by death. Some of these works include: "Hommage," "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe," and "Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire." Perhaps in writing these poems, he sees a last opportunity to express his thanks to the poet for the influence and inspiration received.

In all these poems, he never fails to mention the author's works. He seems to say that even though the poet is dead he will live forever through the immortality of his poetry. This is also the Parnassian idea going back to "L'Art" by Théophile Gautier.

The following poem "Le Vierge, le Vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui" was written during the same period as "Toast Funèbre." Perhaps the only similarity they share is found in technique. It is said that "Toast Funèbre" constitutes almost indisputably, the summit of Mallarmé's total work. Each word in the poem, has a special function. Not only in this poem but also in most of Mallarmé's poems, the technique is almost perfect. This perfection in style shows the influence of the Parnassian school.

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui  
Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre  
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre  
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui.

Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui  
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre

Pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où vivre  
Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l'ennui.

Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie  
Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie,  
Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.

Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,  
Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris  
Que vet parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.<sup>1</sup>

"Le Vierge, le vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui" is a sonnet written in the alexandrine line. Every line in the sonnet is written in the classique alexandrine.

The poem can be divided into two parts: The first four lines constitute the first part of the sonnet. It seems as if the action of the whole sonnet is reversed. After reading the entire poem, it appears that the first quatrain should come last and the second first.

The first quatrain explains that a frozen lake has been forgotten. The lake is haunted by a prisoner who wants to escape. The question is: Will the prisoner in the ice be freed by the present from a forgotten lake of the past?

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui  
Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre  
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre  
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui.

The last two lines of the first quatrain paint with parnassian precision the glassy dull light of reflection under the hoar-frost, and the spectral and unreal tonality is reinforced by the use of the abstract "flights" for wings and by the negation of flights not flown.

Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre  
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui.

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, "Le Vierge, Le Vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui," p. 72.



The second quatrain informs the reader that it is a swan who desires to be free.

Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui  
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre.

Little by little, the beating wings of the opening are fixed, held and crystallized. It is this death of an effort, this contraction of hope, this retreat toward the immobility imposed by the environment, which is the real subject of the poem. The sonnet, like a piece of music, is a movement which can be found in many real situations and which can give rise to numerous interpretations. Essentially it represents an unsuccessful attempt to escape, the preparation of a revolt by his surroundings that impose themselves as an obsession.

The protest of the first tercet is only the movement of the bird's head and neck, shaking off the snow and frost, fallen from the upper air which no longer exists for him and which he denies by ceasing to move.

Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie  
Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie,  
Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.

In the second tercet, there is total immobility, the spectral whiteness, winter, cold, and silence are triumphant:

Fantome qu'a ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,  
Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris  
Que vet parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.

With this triumph the sonnet closes, the poem ends.

Whiteness was always for Mallarmé a synonym for sterility and death. Perhaps partly through the connection with winter, but also because of the whiteness of an empty page, the paper that its whiteness defends. It might be said that he struggled all his life against this

"whiteness" which represents the special enemy of writers. But it is also his own sterility, an inability to live or act. Yet on the other hand, it is a curious mode of perfection, the perfection that one sees expressed by the parnassian poets.

Of Mallarmé's short poems, this sonnet, the swan is perhaps the best known. It attracts attention first by its astonishing tonal unity, its accumulation of whiteness and frosty glitter:

Virgin, lively, hard, lake, frost, transparent,  
glacier, swan, stérile, winter, ennui, white,  
agony, phantom, cold dream, useless exile.

No poet has accumulated in fourteen lines so many frosty syllables, so many overtones of the words winter and white.

Technically, this tonal unity is reinforced by the almost obsessional persistence of a single alliteration, the short cold "i's" of the rhythmes shine through the whole sonnet like icicles. Another cause of its relative popularity is that the poem is evidently symbolic in general intention, and any cultivated person can at any rate see the general drift of it. The solitary swan, imprisoned in an icy landscape evokes at once the artist in his "ivory tower," his estrangement from the world, his icy dream of contempt, his boredom, his useless purity, and too often, his sterility. This brings us to the well known region of "Art for Arts" sake. Notice that each rime contains the voyelle i. Not only is this sound found at the end of every line but also within the poem:

vierge, vivace, déchirer, oublié, glacier,  
qui, souvient, hiver, resplendi, infligée,  
lieu, s'immobilise, parmi, l'exil, inutile.

The repetition of this sound could symbolize the sterility of the poem.

The traditional artist is a voluntary prisoner, despising the external world. The Swan in the poem, only thinks of escaping from the surrounding purity; he is immobilized against his will, cursing the cruelty of his exile. The Swan is representative of the poet, Mallarmé, himself.

"Le Vierge, le Vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui" is romantic in the poet's expression of his desire to be free. The exiled swan is no more than Stéphane Mallarmé who aspires to a platonic perfection of beauty. The swan is an ideal symbol. The only difference between this poem and those of the romanticists is that Mallarmé speaks indirectly of himself. At the same time, the poem contains parnassian elements, Mallarmé wanted to produce what the parnassians called 'true art.' The useless exile is his artistic remoteness. It is really 'useless' because the highest ideal is not reached. He often lamented the mediocrity of his work as opposed to that of his dream.

"Hérodias" and "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" will not be analyzed in detail. Along with a summary, romantic aspects will be pointed out in each of the works.

In Mallarmé's career no other work has the sustained importance of "Hérodias." From its very beginning to the end of the poet's life, he was endlessly preoccupied with its composition. None of his other works cost him so much pain and effort. Unable to complete "Hérodias," Mallarmé was unwilling to let it go and his inability to leave the poem alone even after he resolved to abandon it as a play is in itself proof of the power of its fascination.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Black, op. cit., p. 9.

The central figure of "Hérodiade" is a sublime, unyielding, starry-eyed virgin; a heroine whose thirst for purity makes her reject life. Hérodiade is a complex being. She is a child, yet she is on the edge of womanhood. Being a figure of poetic imagination, she emerges from a creative dream-zone in which works and sensations are strangely mixed.

Even though "Hérodiade" represents a female figure, she is the incarnation of Mallarmé himself, anxious about his fate. Hérodiade's attitude toward virginity corresponds to the poet's rejection of reality.

The poem is divided into three parts: (1) ouverture, (2) scène and (3) Cantique de Saint John. The whole of the ouverture is one long soliloquy by Hérodiade's nurse, Herodiade is not seen. The nurse speaks of the solitude and loneliness of their surroundings. She mentions a dead pool on the outside which frightens away the birds. The nurse sees Hérodiade's renunciation of life as a violation against nature and very frankly says so. She describes the empty bed, the fading flowers in the room. She hears a voice like an incantation but it fades away as she looks again at the pool which recalls the reality of the present. Toward the end of the soliloquy, the nurse speaks of Hérodiade's walks at daybreak and in the evening. Finally, Hérodiade is compared to an exiled Swan. This Swan is representative of one of Mallarmé's most loved symbols. He occurs in many of his works.

The nurse represents a sort of projection of Hérodiade. She also represents the future woman that Hérodiade will not become.

The Scène opens with Hérodiade in bed. Her chilly nature is

immediately apparent when she rebukes her nurse for wanting to straighten her up and comb her hair. Hérodiane brags of her power over the lions. Perhaps this is symbolically her control over the fleshly lusts of the world. Then she undresses before the pool in the mirror scene. She does not want her hair combed, she only wants to preserve that virginal sterile metallic appearance. In the mirror, pool, Hérodiane tries to analyze herself. She is too proud to please anyone but herself. The scène ends with her not knowing what she wants. Her joy in her self-possession is her supreme glory and fulfillment.<sup>1</sup>

J'aime L'horreur d'être vierge et je veux  
Vivre parmi l'effroi que me font mes cheveux  
Pour, le soir, retirée en ma couche.<sup>2</sup>

The nurse, with her assurance that Hérodiane's pride will someday fall, drives the princess to a declaration of her existence:

Pour qui, dévorée  
d'angoisses, gardez-vous  
la splendeur ignorée et le  
Mystère vain de votre être?<sup>3</sup>

The last part of the poem is "Cantique de Saint-John." Hérodiane, symbolizing an aspect of the poet himself, will not have an ordinary lover but Saint John, the pure God-like spirit whose transfixing look could alone possess her. Only the head of Saint-John is presented with its piercing eyes. The poem ends without really knowing if

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<sup>1</sup>  
C. F. MacIntyre, Stéphane Mallarmé, Selected Poems (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>  
Mallarmé, "Hérodiane," p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid., p. 47.

Hérodiade marries Saint-John or not.

With Mallarmé, the romantic intensity reaches its apogee as expressed in the unprecedented vibrancy of his images:

Ô Miroir  
Eau froide par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée  
Que de fois et pendant des heures, desolée  
Des songes et cherchant mes souvenirs qui sont  
Comme des feuilles sous ta glace au trou profond  
Je m'apparus en toi comme une ombre lointaine,  
Mais, horreur des soirs, dans ta sévère fontaine,  
J'ai de mon rêve épars ennui la nudité.<sup>1</sup>

"Hérodiade" expresses an aspect of romanticism in its constant reference to nature.

The poem is also romantic in versification: There are many examples of enjambement:

J'aime l'horreur d'être vierge et je veux  
Vivre parmi l'effroi que me font mes cheveux.<sup>2</sup>

Sous la lourde prison de pierres et de fer  
ou de mes vieux lions traînent les siècles fauvex.<sup>3</sup>

Et comme suppliant le dieu que le trésor  
de votre grace attend...<sup>4</sup>

Mallarmé also makes use of the romantic trimeter: "Des pales lys / qui sont en moi / tandis qu'épris." Examples of dissonance are also seen:

"Et regardent mes pieds qui calmeraient la mer."

Hérodiade represents a life long work and a desire to obtain

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

perfection. It reflects the drama of Mallarmé's own complex evolution toward maturity. Her state of confusion is representative of his uncertainty of the real and ideal. Her idea of sterility and coldness is no more than that of Mallarmé himself.

It has been stated that "Hérodiade" marks or leads to the culmination of Parnassian influence in Mallarmé. "L'Après-Midi d'un faune" was begun in 1865, a year after "Hérodiade" and its main theme is romantic. The faun symbolizes for Stéphane, the unattainable dream desired. Perhaps the entire poem depicts phases of Mallarmé's life, especially his attempt to obtain his ideal in poetry and his difficulty in distinguishing the ideal from the real.

"Ces Nymphes, Je les veux perpétuer!"<sup>1</sup> A faun lies asleep under the thick boughs of a woods in Sicily. The landscape is burnt around him by the fierce light of a summer afternoon. The faun half wakes. He has been dreaming of the rape of nymphs and with his eyes still shut he tries to prolong the voluptuous vision as long as possible, perhaps to immortalize it. Meanwhile, he opens his eyes, but the illusion of his dream is so strong that he still sees the luminous forms of the goddesses shimmering, the rough shadows, partly due to his own sleep, partly to the motionless leafage over his head and hence the doubt: "Aimai-je un rêve."<sup>2</sup>

The heaviness of sleep has left the faun uncertain. But while the shades of sleep evaporate, the branches of the trees persist:

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

Oui, dans une île que l'air charge  
De vue et non de visions.<sup>1</sup>

There is no more doubt, the faun sees that he was alone and had merely dreamed. But his subtle spirit meditates a hypothesis. There were two nymphs in his dream:

Faune l'illusion s'échappe des yeux bleus  
Et froids, comme une source en pleurs, de la plus chaste.<sup>2</sup>

The chaster one of the two had blue and cold eyes. It is not clear whether the illusion that escapes from the blue eyes of the chaster nymph is enhanced or dissipated.<sup>3</sup>

Mais, l'autre, tout soupirs, dis-tu-qu'elle  
Comme brise du jour chaude dans ta toison?<sup>4</sup>

If the cold nymph existed merely as a spring water, perhaps the warm one existed as a summer breeze. The faun is unsure. There is nothing left for him to do but to abandon all further questioning and, follow his own inspiration to sing of his own dream.<sup>5</sup>

Que je coupais ici les creux roseaux domptés  
par le talent; quand, sur l'or glauque de lointaines  
Verdures dédiant leur vigne à des fontaines,  
Ondoie une blancheur animale au repos:  
Et qu'au prélude lent où naissent les pipeaux

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Roulet, op. cit., p. 46.



Ce vol de cygnes, non de naiades se suave.<sup>1</sup>

Of this headlong flight nothing now subsists; nothing in the calm of this afternoon reveals the panic and flight of the troop of goddesses, too numerous to be taken by surprise, which disappeared the moment the naive musician gave "la" on his flute.<sup>2</sup>

The story continues and the faune tells how, after the flight of the naiads, as he still pursued them, suddenly found two nymphs sleep at his feet mingled in a careless embrace:

J'accours; quand, à mes pieds, s'entrejoignent  
De la langueur goûtée à ce mal d'être deux  
Des dormeuse parmi leurs seuls bras hasardeux.<sup>3</sup>

They are not a true amorous couple but merely juxta-posed. There is a further allusion to a more general separation between any two realities short of total union in pure love, not present in this life. He seizes the couple and carries them off in the hope of a burning amour, toward a mass of roses. There, inspite of their resistance, he covers with kisses the bodies of the two goddesses, from the feet of the cruel one to the heart of the timid one. But the anger of the Gods, aroused by seeing the ravishing faun break in this way, the embrace of the virgins, that dishevelled tangle of kisses that they themselves kept so well, interrupted him and at that moment when the satyr was abandoning himself to more intimate pleasures, a sudden feebleness,

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<sup>1</sup> Mallarme, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Mondor, Histoire d'un Faune (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 106.

<sup>3</sup> Mondor, op. cit., p. 108.

a vague failing, makes him lose his grasp. The two nymphs escape from him, both the burning virgin and the younger naive one.<sup>1</sup>

La petite, naive et ne rougissant pas,  
Que de mes bras, défauts par de vagues trépas,  
Sans pitié du sanglot dont j'étais encore ivre.<sup>2</sup>

The faun consoles himself by the thought of future delights, when they will inevitably come back to him. The faun is given to boasting. He even flatters himself before hand with the thought of a sensational rape. When the evening comes venus descends, poses her white feet on Etna who sleeps. Surely the faun will ravish venus. "Je tiens la reine."<sup>3</sup> He holds her already, the queen of all nymphs who will avenge him on the others "Ô sur chatiment."<sup>4</sup>

The very exaggeration of the dream shows that the faun is falling asleep again. He is going to plunge into sleep to find again that night wherein dreams float and dissolve, the shade wherein the nymphs disappeared.

The form of "l'Après-Midi d'un Faune" is infused with a high order of lyricism. Its underlying concerns are with the movement of time, the tricks of imagination and memory.<sup>5</sup> The tormented longing of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mondor, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Mondor, Mallarmé (Suisse: pierre-Caillre, 1947), p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 164.

<sup>5</sup> Isadore M. Shartar, The Theater of the Mind, An Analysis of the Works of Stéphane Mallarmé (Calif: University of California Press, 1952), p. 17.

faun may well have been the longing of the poet as well. Mallarmé's hero, the faun, is not only an incarnation of the artist but both as a sensual and spiritual being, torn by the conflict of dream and actuality, is universally symbolic.

The sensual and passion driven faun is directly opposed to "Herodiade" and her refusal of physical experience, although the obsession with virginity of the princess may be an inverted assertion of passion, moving side by side with her insistence on the denial of the senses.

Debussy is said to have declared in writing his admirable *prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, he followed the poem verse by verse. Certainly it is possible to find in the music sleep hesitations of the opening, the empty, sonorous, monotonous line of pipes, the flight of the naiads, the voluptuous ardour of the central scene, the scattering of the motive, the return to solitude and finally the reversion to the consciousness of sleep.<sup>1</sup>

One could also say that the overall theme is one of uncertainty which could also be representative of the poet's life. The poet can be seen not only in the faun, in his attempt to reach the ideal, but also in the two nymphs, expressing his duality.

The evidence presented in the preceding analyses is sufficient to justify the conclusion that Mallarmé and his works can be considered as a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism. Being the father of Symbolism, aspects of the schools were seen in all of the poems analyzed. The most notable ones are seen in symbols such as blancheur, l'azur, and cygne as seen in the poem "Les Fenêtres." One finds azur and idéel in "L'Azur" and blancs, azur, and rêve are seen in

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<sup>1</sup> Mondor, op. cit., p. 187.

"L'Apparition" and cygne and stérile in "Le Vierge, Le Vivace et le Bel Aujourd'hui."

Along with form and composition, the most eminent romantic elements in the works of Mallarmé are the examples of personal lyricism. As for as Parnassianism is concern, there are no specific elements to be pointed out, but parnassian influence is shown in the technique of every poem analyzed. It is Mallarmé's perfection in form that brings him into the region of Art for Art's sake.

## CONCLUSION

It has been concluded that the works of Stéphane Mallarmé can be considered as a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism in view of evidence presented in the analyses of some of his works. Specific elements of Parnassianism cannot be pointed out but influence of the school is evident in Mallarmé's vigorous attempt to obtain perfection in his poetry. His technique is almost perfect. For example in the poem "L'Apparition," there are no examples of weak rime, only rich and sufficient.

Pleurs-fleurs, violes-corolles, baiser-martyriser,  
tristesse-laisse, cueilli-vieilli, rue-apparue,  
Clarté-gâté, fermées-parfumées.

The form is concise, laboured and well arranged. Basically he employs the same type of alexandrine line in a poem. As for the poem "L'Apparition," Mallarmé uses the alexandrin classique. There is only one example of the alexandrin romantique. At times, there is a mixture of the two types but on a whole, he is coherent in his usage of the alexandrine line. This insistence on precision is an indication of parnassian influence.

Directing attention to the elements of Romanticism, personal lyricism is expressed in all of the poems analyzed in this paper. Perhaps Mallarmé's romantic tendency is more clearly brought out in "Les Fenêtres" and "L'Azur" than in any of the other works studied. With "Les Fenêtres" Mallarmé becomes so intensely involved in an attempt to escape his impossible ideal, that there is almost nothing impersonal about the entire poem. He seems to restrain himself as long as

possible in his description of an ill man wanting to escape the banality of a hospital and his similarity to a poet. He is so deeply involved that he eventually gives up to the use of the first person singular, *je*, expressing his desire to be free. From this point on, the reader knows that the sick man and the general reference to poets are only symbols representing Mallarmé himself. The personal lyricism in "Les Fenêtres" is almost expressed in the same manner as the romantic poets would have done. With "L'Azur," Mallarmé becomes so obsessed with himself and his desire to obtain his ideal perfection in poetry that, as in "Les Fenêtres," he almost reaches the type of lyricism expressed by the romanticists. He becomes so involved that he approaches a point of madness. His obsession is marked with so much depth that he feels that he is haunted by it. As was pointed out in "Les Fenêtres," Mallarmé uses words in "L'Azur" that are often used by the romantic poets.

Agonie, hanté, obscur dégoût, vorace, âme fuir,  
triste, l'horreur.

With the exception of "Les Fenêtres" and "L'Azur" Mallarmé's subjectivity is more discreet and restrained in that it is always symbolized by something or someone else. For example, in "Toast Funèbre" it is Théophile Gautier. He wishes not only that Gautier remains renowned through the greatness of his poetry but he has himself in mind as well. With "Le Vierge, le Vivace, et le Bel Anjourd'hui" it is the swan who serves to symbolize the poet in his desire to reach his ideal perfection in poetry. With "Hérodiade" the symbol, although represented by a young lady, is Hérodiade herself. The poem could reflect the drama of Mallarmé's own complex evolution toward maturity. In "L'Après-Midi

d'un Faune," Mallarmé is symbolized by the faun and the two nymphs. The faun represents Mallarmé in his attempt to obtain the ideal and the nymphs express his duality.

As has been pointed out, each poem is romantic in its expression of personal lyricism by the poet. It should not be forgotten that there are also romantic elements in versification as seen in the uses of the romantic trimeter, and in certain words and images that are often used by the romantic poets.

With reference to parnassian influence, it should be remembered that aspects of the school are seen in Mallarmé's works through his condensed form (every word is essential to the composition of the work), his idea of long meditation and research on words, his concentration on syntax, and his persistence on certain literary forms, (alliteration) and repetition of vowels.

These romantic and parnassian tendencies are so prevalent in the poetry and in such perfect harmony and balance that they seem to justify the conclusion that Mallarmé's literary production can be considered as a synthesis of Romanticism and Parnassianism.

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